

CHAPTER IX.

THE RISING OF THE COMMUNEROS IN SPAIN.

THE marriage of Isabella of Castile and Ferdinand of Aragon at Valladolid on the *igth* October 1469 was an event of capital importance for both the monarchy and people of Spain. It was the beginning of the end of faction and anarchy, and of constitutional development as well. But four years before (June 1465) the independent, factious spirit of the Castilian magnates had given expression to the widespread contempt for the government of the impotent Henry IV. in the drastic ceremony performed at Avila. The spectacle there presented is very significant of the low ebb to which respect for royalty had sunk in a country so soon to become the palladium of despotic rulers by the grace of God. On a platform erected on an eminence near the city was enthroned the effigy of the disreputable Henry, arrayed in black, and wearing the royal insignia—crown, sword, sceptre. Around the platform stood a vast crowd of spectators, representative of all classes, from noble to peasant, and from this assembly a herald advanced to recite the evil deeds of the royal effigy in black, and pronounce sentence of deposition. The execution of this sentence gave still more emphatic expression to the impatience of these factious malcontents at the *regime* of a king who had neglected to do their will, instead of his own. The Archbishop of Toledo followed the herald and plucked the crown from the head of the figure in black. The Marquess of Villena denuded it of the sceptre and threw it on the ground below. The effigy itself crashed after it, and was smashed by the crowd, while Henry's brother Alfonso took its place on the throne as actual king amid the applause of the people.

Henry IV., nevertheless, succeeded in maintaining his precarious kingship for ten years after this drastic display of